



Creative Communities

Grant Program

Phase 1 Guidelines
Fiscal Year 2027

This program is also supported with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts.



Purpose:

The Creative Communities grants program encourages arts education, cultural understanding, and community arts development in Wisconsin. It provides support for projects that the applicant does *with* the community rather than just *for* the community, and that further the Arts Board's goals in the following three areas: [Arts Education](#), [Folk and Traditional Arts](#), or [Local Arts](#).

Applicants are welcome to submit one proposal to one of these three categories per year. For a full overview of the Creative Community Program guidelines for Phase 1 and Phase 2, see the [Creative Communities webpage](#).

Eligibility:

Applicants must:

1. have been doing mission-related work for three years prior to application, and
2. either hold tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code, or be part of a larger nonprofit institution or a unit of state, local, or tribal government including public schools and universities.
3. review the full list of [Creative Communities Eligibility Requirements](#).

If the applicant does not hold tax exempt status, it may apply using a separate nonprofit organization as a fiscal receiver.

Note: Organizations may not receive a Creation and Presentation grant and a Creative Communities grant within the same fiscal year. Please contact staff with questions.

FY27 Phase 1 Timeline	
February 11, 2026	12:15pm virtual Q&A session for applicants*
February 11, 2026	New applicants to WAB's Creative Communities program must notify the Arts Board of their intent to apply by this date. Notification should be in the form of an email to artsboard@wisconsin.gov .
February 18, 2026 by 3pm	Deadline for Phase 1 applications
March 6, 2026	Eligible applicants are invited to submit a Phase 2 application
March 12, 2026	12:15pm virtual Q&A session for Phase 2 applicants*
March 26, 2026 by 3pm	Deadline for Phase 2 applications
April 23-May 1, 2026	Grant application review panel meetings
July 1, 2026	Earliest date that grant expenses can be incurred and grant funds can be spent
June 30, 2027	Last date that grant expenses can be incurred and grant funds can be spent
<p>*Virtual Q&A - Use this time to ask questions of WAB staff and hear other applicants' questions. Use this link to register for the Q&A session: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/siOGgk-HQwyxToLnAzHKLQ. While this session is not required, it is encouraged.</p>	

Please note: While funds should be available on July 1, grant checks may not arrive until as late as October, depending on State Legislative and Administrative action. If your project occurs before October, please contact staff to discuss the impact this may have on your project.

Grant Amounts:

Grants will range from a minimum of \$1,500 to a maximum of \$6,000. A 1:1 match, half of which must be cash, is required from the applicant for these funds. (The amount of the grant request cannot be more than half the overall budget of the project.)

To Apply:

New applicants to WAB's Creative Communities program must send an email to artsboard@wisconsin.gov by February 11, 2026, stating their intent to apply and providing a phone number at which they can be reached if WAB staff has questions.

All applicants must complete the Phase 1 application form and submit it electronically by **Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 3:00 pm** to the Wisconsin Arts Board. Late Phase 1 applications will not be accepted. It is the responsibility of the applicant to submit the application by the deadline day and time.

The federal government, through the National Endowment for the Arts, requires all WAB grant applicants to obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). To obtain your organization's UEI, follow the instructions at <https://SAM.gov/content/entity-registration>. The UEI is a required part of your Creative Communities grant application. Please allow two weeks for this process.

New applicant organizations

Organizations that have not previously registered within the WAB online application system (SmartSimple) must:

- Click the 'Register' button at the bottom of the page and complete registration.
 - Your new user information will be emailed to the address you provide within your registration within 10 minutes. Please activate immediately. The password will expire.
 - **Please note:** If you are a new contact for an organization that has already registered within the WAB online application system, please contact WAB staff at artsboard@wisconsin.gov.
 - Follow the steps outlined below.

Organizations that are registered within the WAB online application system

1. Log-in to WAB's Online Application System (<http://wab.smartsimple.com/>)
2. After logging in, click 'Funding Opportunities,' and choose Creative Communities.
3. Complete the **Applicant Information** tab and click the 'Save Draft' button at the bottom of the page.
4. Click the round letter icon in the top righthand corner of the form and select '**Organizational Profile.**' Complete/update:
 - a. the UEI information (if not previously completed)
 - b. the Mission Statement
 - c. the Brief Organizational History section

After completing/updating, click on the 'Save' button at the bottom of the page.

5. Complete the application form, clicking 'Save Draft' at the end of each page.
 - Be sure to address each of the points requested within the **Project Summary** (450-word maximum).
6. When finished, click 'Submit.' *Reminder: **Submission deadline is 3pm, February 18, 2026.***
7. You will receive a confirmation email once your submission has been accepted.

Panelists will evaluate your application based primarily on your 450-word project summary, using the following criteria.

Phase 1 Evaluation Criteria:

- 1) Project aligns with the purpose of the Creative Communities program and the goals for the relevant component.
 - [Arts Education goals](#)
 - [Local Arts goals](#)
 - [Folk and Traditional Arts goals](#)
- 2) Project's artistic merit and/or educational/cultural value is strong.
- 3) Level of community participation and accessibility is high.
- 4) An extra point will be awarded to projects that the grant application review panel identifies as especially creative/innovative/timely.

Grant Proposal Writing Assistance: Arts Board staff is available to provide grant proposal assistance throughout the year. Call (608) 266-0190 or email artsboard@wisconsin.gov.